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A L P H A B E T

FOR THE

G R O W N - U P

Grammarians.

OF

G R E A T - B R I T A I N .

By J O H N C O L L I E R .

A SUPPOSED LUNATIC.

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P R E F A C E.

How came error into the mind of man? is not as material a question now as—how to get it out?

WAS I forced to reply to the first, I should suppose the human species for ages bordering nearly upon dull sluggish beasts—with few wants and very few sounds to convey those wants into the minds of each other.—These sounds would then be very simple, but very expressive, (i. e.) they would be the sounds of things themselves, formed according to their place of being, tone of substance, and atmosphere.—In this point our Saxon language stands foremost : For instance—take up a stone or an axe and knock it against a tree, and I cannot help fancying but with the breath of the striker it says Wood ! as plain as letters can form or we can pronounce it.—Listen to the Ass, and mock the note

through your nose, and you cannot help thinking it says: Ah--o ! from whence the Assino, Asne, or Awue of foreigners : But our British and Saxon ancestors: when the grave and learned Latinist was introduced into their country in preference of their spirited lively Kessyls and Gallopaways, wondering at the drollness of his make, and struck with the strangeness of his note before they could sound the whole of his tone, burst into laughter and closed it with an S—— which named him an ASS.

I am serious, Reader, and will give you another proof——lift up your right hand and slap it smartly on the back of the left, and it says Smack ! as plain as you can say it for your blood.—This I call the language of God, of nature, of common sense: and every thing else is vanity, error, and vexation of spirit—— witness the whipped buttocks, stupid stare, oppressed memory, and squalid countenances of our children—— witness the sourness and torturing labour of a teacher, and the dull round-about, sleep-sending periods of a thorough-taught grammarian——so much for mistaking learning for knowledge, and enough to prove that error owes its origin to confounding sounds and neglecting things.

How

How to drive error out? is next to be considered, and I answer, the contrary way it came in, by examining things and sounds of things—the first trying what nature is, or what things are; the other, not what men call nature or things, but what nature or things call themselves.

For instance, I would ask a man what luxury was? and make him define not only its nature, but its effects.—I would make a woman do so by love, and a child to tell me why he should honour and obey his parents more than others.—I would make the statesman tell me the use of government, and in what, did its dignity consist.—A priest should be taught to define religion, a soldier glory, a gentleman honour, a tradesman trade, a covetous man riches, a philosopher virtue, the ambitious the advantages of power, and a patriot the love of his country; these should be defined by deeds or facts, not by words; and nothing should be taken either for good or bad, right or wrong, but what, if pursued in its utmost extent, would either totally destroy, or tend to compleat the happiness of mankind.

Pursuing things in this manner, without respect to custom, names, age, persons or power, would soon exhibit them in a different light than they are all

generally held in at present, and found of a different nature from what they are supposed to be.

I conclude with one bold truth—that men are as much wrong in supposing things are good which are now called so, and bad because now said to be so, as they are in reckoning the number of vowels and consonants in their common A. B. C.—In short; they do not seem to know what things—**ARE**!

GENTLEMEN,

YOU say there are five vowels and the lord knows how many consonants ; I say, there are the lord knows how many vowels and but very few consonants : But

What is a vowel?

You say a letter, which when pronounced, forms a compleat sound, or what you call a syllable of its self.—I agree to this definition, and shall now sort the alphabet accordingly.

A.

Is founded by opening the mouth, and pushing out the breath through the throat, the tongue lying still in the hollow of the under

jaw.

jaw—this forms a compleat sound, and certainly makes A a vowel *.

B.

Close your lips good folk—what do they make? you say no sound at all—I say so too, and this makes B a consonant, which both you and I agree is a letter formed by one motion only, but a vowel by more; which distinction, in my opinion, is the only thing that points out the difference between a *vowel* and a consonant—do not therefore forget this definition, and read on †.

C.

A letter so variously used as to make it either vowel or consonant—before E

I

* I do not pronounce A like some teachers in the North, as a mongrel or diphthong between A and E because the custom of the English language generally (thrice for once) sounds it, as in *as*, *and*, *man*, *can*, *shall*, *stab*, &c. &c. nor as the Scotch at present sound it *Aw*, as in *call*, *all*, *fall*, *fall*—the first I think too narrow, the latter too broad.

† See the letter P.

I and Y only it is a vowel, and an S— before all the rest it is a consonant and a K— I wish either it or K fairly kicked out of the alphabet, for one I think certainly useless *. However, as up-grown men cannot be weaned from error all at once, I must pronounce it to be on an average, a *consonant*.

D.

This letter is formed by an entire stoppage of the breath, by putting the tongue to the roof of the mouth, and pushing its under side close to the inside of the upper jaw—this is a simple motion only, and constitutes D a consonant.

Indeed after one of my vowels (and I will have them and no other) by the rushing out

of

* See farther proof under G and K, where a confusion reigns past my clearing up, but it is worth notice to observe, that the Saxon and British had no K, but used C, as in *Cymrbw*, *Cymbeline*, *Geolfrid*, *Geonred*, &c. which were pronounced as the Welsh pronounce the first *Cumrbew*,—so with *Kymbeline*, *Kelfrid*, *Kenred*. &c.—this shews the K to be a modern innovation, brought in only as a short-hand composite representative of the Greek Χ or CH.

of the confined breath on loosening the tongue from the roof of the mouth, a sort of E scarcely perceptible, is formed only through necessity to let in fresh breath for further discourse.

Is only a lesser opening of the mouth than A, but without its second motion or breath. In this state it can be no more than a consonant, and being joined or melted together with A, forms a diphthong or mixed sound, like A in *ape, tape, nape, &c.* Before one of my vowels it is a consonant; before or after one of my consonants it is a vowel. As therefore greater part of letters are vowels I must pronounce it a mongrel, or rather—a mere consonant.

F.

Is formed by a gentle close of the lips, the upper one hanging a little over *, and pushing

* Pray look at its form—I may tell you more afterwards when forms come to be discussed.

pushing the breath briskly through to open them.—These two motions form a distinct soft sound, and constitute it a vowel to all intents and purposes ; and when used has the same sound with the ancient Roman vowel V, and indeed are so like each other in sound and use, that the latter may be kicked out of the alphabet as soon as you please, provided you keep in F.

G.

Is formed like the letter C, by the root of the tongue being put to the roof of the mouth and the breath stopped ; this is what is called its hard sound, or rather no sound at all, till a little guggle of the throat comes ; in which case it is certainly near a consonant but in fact a vowel.—When it has its soft sound as in *generation*, it becomes a vowel, by the breath being forced gently through both sides of the tongue, which makes it a soft vowel, and nearest the mixture of G S H ; but as it is

is sounded three times hard for once soft, it consequently classes it among the mongrels, believing it as a vowel to be one of the most delicate and difficult letters in the alphabet to describe or dissect.

H.

Is the only letter in the alphabet that ever was described in our grammars, as being only a short breath forced by the throat through an open mouth ; and therefore justly termed an aspirate. Before a vowel it is a total mute, and another useless corrupter of our alphabet and language ; and indeed generally wrong placed, as in honor, which must be pronounced *obnor*, as if after the vowel whether you will or not—In *Hab!* or rather quick ah ! it expresses naturally enough the sudden effect a surprise has on the lungs, but in other cases it only miserably fatigues the speaker, excepting where it comes after a consonant as in *th.*

I.

I.

Before one of my consonants is a half vowel like E, but before a vowel a mere nothing ; it is made by a little shorter break or motion of the tongue than E, and keeping the lips motionless : This singleness of motion fixes it among the consonants, but where it sounds like Y, of which it is an unnecessary modern substitute in our language, as in the word *might* for *myght*, and *fight* for *fȝight*, then only it commences vowel.—I therefore, because consisting in the first case of but one sign or motion, pronounce it a mongrel, though oftener a consonant.

(K)

This is a strange letter, and seems so confounded with C, as scarce to be separated from it without investigating the radicals of almost every language since the days of Adam.—I must here venture a supposition,

that from the heterogenous compound of Greek, Latin, British, Saxon and Danish characters and sounds making our present hotch-potch of all, that S and C, if not even G, were originally one character*, being very like, if not exactly the same sound ;——that our hard G sounded and stood for our K and hard C : our soft C for

S

* In discussing C I observed it and K to be sadly confounded, and cannot help thinking the old E on the ancient Greek medals, though their S to be parent to our C in shape and our soft C in sound ; consequently our hard C should answer the Greek κ or cappa, and our soft C be changed to an S ; not that I suppose the shape of S to be as antient as the zigma or E of the Greeks ; but as it is so varied from others in form, I have that reason for receiving it and throwing out K.

This confusion of sound and shape appears to be another proof of the unnecessary corruption which the false ideas of the blundering Romans brought into letters, and no wonder since they, as well as later ages, could never clear their brain sufficiently to distinguish between *custom* and *reason*, *might* and *right*, nor between *destroying* the *lives* and *liberties* of others and *preserving* their own.

No wonder to find from such confusion of signs, sounds, and thoughts, that error should reign sovereign over their *will*, and prompt them to violence and villainy in their actions—or that war, blood, and that worse than man created non-existent phantom GLORY, should be pursued at the expence of ease and happiness.

S and soft **G** is also very likely; and this confusion arose from mistaking the old Greek character or **S** on several medals, shaped thus **C** for an hard **C**—**K** or **G** instead of a real **S** or soft **C**, **G**, or **J**, on which account, to search for proof, requires more time and knowledge than at present I can afford.

L

A vowel in every case, and so clearly so, that it need only be sounded to convince it can be any thing else.—The tongue is only thrust upwards to the inside of the upper jaw, and breath forced through its sides, and making a little sound in the gullet.

M

A vowel as clear as any yet fixed, and sounded by close lips, and humming through the nose.

N.

Another vowel as clearly as sound or reason can form, and differs only from **M** in being

founded by one nostril only, and the tongue being thrust closer to the inside of the upper teeth, while M is sounded by both nostrils ; tand it and N are what I call *nose vowels*.

O.

A vowel, and formed by a round open mouth : Before one of my vowels it sounds like our customary AU or rather AW ; but indeed in our language the old Saxon O is actually pronounced not like a diphthong, but as it is in nature, as in *broden* for *broaden* — And we may venture to suppose, from the remains of this old language, erroneously called dialect, yet remaining in part of Lancashire and other parts of the kingdom, that O preceding E, or the Roman U or V, is formed in sound like the Greek Ω and ω, our old Saxon ƿ or Gothic Ƿ, our more modern Ƿ, and our present W or Woo. This shews my note upon F to be no less just than curious, and leads to an investigation and criticism not only upon the sound and duplicity of our present letters, but also upon their

their form, in a manner that may not only entertain but *surprise* and *instruct* those, who for want of reflection, have swallowed the whims and errors of ages for gospel truths, and paid almost *divine* veneration to *names*, without any relation to things, sounds, or thought, to justify their folly.

P.

Differs only from B in being sounded without any bloat or puff of breath in the cheeks, while P is a closer close, and without a bloat or puff—this is so little a distinction that one might be well spared out of the alphabet ; but if kept in I name it a consonant.

Q.

Is the devil of a letter in our alphabet, because—it is none at all ; and being a nothing

I wonder how it came by its tail †—if only to save trouble in writing K or C, by scrawling at least the quantity of two CC's and a half, or to brush the road for Master U, I beg Ma-dam K may be used in its stead, and let Q make room for

R.

A letter of the most curious construction, in regard to sound, in the whole alphabet, and very difficult to pronounce by the northern nations of Europe, particularly the Danes and Norwegians, from whose long residence in Northumberland I suppose the pre-

[†] It may indeed be said that Q and U make a vowel or diphthong between them, I answer K and U do the same.— If nicer judgments should observe a twist of the mouth in QUI or QUO, which KU has not, I reply that our KW will answer KWITE as well; and indeed this double vowel OY, OE, or W is shamefully neglected by almost all languages, except the Greek, and that which we ought to reverence most, (i. e.) the British or Welch, and next to it the Saxon or old English, both which retain it and the Y, or Greek Epsilon in a very proper and frequent manner.—Q is only a bastard begotten by an ignorant Latin soldier on the body of the elegant Greek Θ or Ω, to which he affixed a sound like KV instead of TH.

sent inhabitants of that part owe their difficulty in pronouncing this letter; being obliged, for want of a vibration of the point of the tongue, to force the breath more violently through the throat, and use the root instead of the tip, in order to break the sound in its passage, by which means, instead of a trill or shake, it acquires what is called a gutteral, or rather a choaking guggle of a sound.

To avoid this I need only observe, that it is no more in general than a vowel of any kind shaken or trilled with the tip of the tongue; for found what vowel you will before an R, it requires no other alteration than the shake or trill before mentioned, as in ER, AR, or OR, where it is as clearly the same as the vowel preceding it, and as much a one as any letter in the alphabet ‡.

S.

‡ To shew its force we need but pronounce the R simply with or without, before or after any other letter, as in *rl* or *rth*, or *rs* or *rn*; the first will be *erl*, *arl*, or *orl*.

S.

The perfection of the sound convinces you 'tis a vowel at first touch, and on examination you will find it the most remarkable one in the whole alphabet; and no wonder, since it even requires to form it no less than three motions: the first the opening the lips, nearly closing the teeth, next, thrusting the point only of the tongue close to the fissure; and last, forcing the spittle through with the breath.

T.

Is formed by a smart pressure of the tip of the tongue to the middle part of the inside of

orl and the other *artb.* *irtb.*, *urth*, and the *rs* will be *ars*, *irs*. the *rn* will be *yrn*, *orn*, &c. &c.—this shews it to be a vowel of what I call a dry kind, in difference to humming or nose vowels, as M and N, or the medium vowels as A, L, O, Y, and their diphthongs: The F, soft G, and old useful Saxon vowel *ſ* or th, and British one W, are what I call moist vowels, or as a sailor would expressit, a sound between wind and water; and the S is as fixed by our grammarians, really a liquid or wet letter, and the strongest representative of water, issuing through a fissure—try it!

of the upper gum ; this being a single motion constitutes it a consonant, but when joined with H, it becomes a sort of diphthong to the eye, but in sound and use a vowel ; and both our Saxon ancestors and Greeks knew it to be such, and very wisely made them one character ; and the antient Britons still pronounce the D very like the Greek Θ and Saxon Ð and Ð or *th*, which being the only diphthong we have in our proper tongue or language, (for there is no difference) compounded of one mark, it ought in particular either to be remembered as such, or otherwise the characters remain separate ; yet joined or not joined they make one vowel.

U.

Is by being formed of more than one motion a *vowel*.—It is a delicate, soft sound, begun by an E and little rise of the tongue, which squeezing the breath as pushed through the mouth, draws the lips into a narrowish

O

O or double OO, while the breath coming quick but soft, forms the smooth swell before the liquid S in the expressive word *bush!*

V.

An unnecessary duplicate of F in sound, and as U in use, and so sounded by the old Romans—it therefore is a useless troublesome confuser of our alphabet, and ought to be kicked out of sight directly, having nothing to recommend or distinguish it but the sharp point at the bottom, occasioned by the laziness of a botching Latin workman, who would not, in copying half the Greek π , parent of our Welch W and present U*, either take the trouble or had not the *cunning*, to turn his *marking thing* to *humour* the *handsome roundish*

* To support this supposition, and that the round U was absolutely in use, I quote this inscription on a stone in the gable of a barn at the Roman wall station, *Caervorum JUALERI CASSIA ANO V PXIX.* There may perhaps be others found in different parts to strengthen the exception to the sharp V, and my supposition.

roundish sweep of the Grecian *workman*, but must *needs shape* it according to the *ton* of his identical vivacious imagination, founded upon the exuberant pomposity of Roman splendour, which could never distinguish between *might* and *right*, nor between *right* and *wrong* *.

To say more in favour of F, U, and W, and the Greek, British, and Saxon languages, would be—affronting the thinker, whatever it might a reader.

W.

This letter is a diphthong in one sense, formed by drawing the lips into a mixture of OE or U, and closing it immediately to EH, which sounds a W in a full manner.—In the first motion, the breath is drawn in, this draws the lips to their second motion, or round form, which narrowing again to E, constitutes the third motion!

This

This not only makes it a vowel, but a double vowel or diphthong too ; and as such see it not only in shape, (had it but its true one) but also see the shape express the motions of OE in the Greek, and even the Saxon P, which appears to be no more than the old Greek Ω, (or omega as it is now called) turned sideways *, — but more of this when I come to treat of forms, and the analogy of forms and the relation of things to sounds.

X.

Is such cristy-crosty character, and so seldom used in our language or tongue (for there is no difference in the meaning of those terms) that it puzzles me to begin with it.— I must try however.

It is first formed like K, by putting the tongue to the roof of the mouth, and pressing

* See my notes upon F, K, and Q, where the EAMIAN or old Samos medalic letter E, appears in the different languages of Europe to be parent of no less than c, ch, /b, g, gh, j, s, /b, x or ks, and z or ts.

pressing it so close as to stop the breath, and then dropping a little, the tongue strikes against the teeth, and the breath, by briskly pushing the moisture through their fissure form the liquid or moist vowel X.

It therefore appears to be a vowel, but swelled a little with a consonant, and no more than a composition of our hard C or K and S, and as such, wish it with other useless duplicates — out of the alphabet.

How it and so many others, equally useless and synonymous, came into our alphabet, requires more knowledge of past time, places, men and manners, than I am at present possessed of, but shall hazard a guess on X, to strengthen that given on V, by supposing it introduced by a Greek schoolmaster, in order to teach a thick-sculled Latin he was instructing in arithmetic, to count his fingers, and remember TEN ; and therefore thinking of his *horn-book*, very fortunately adopted the

tenth letter in his alphabet as a sign for that number.

As such only I suppose it introduced, but the Roman booby thinking it a glorious acquisition, would needs cut a dash among his countrymen; and consequently to shew his superiority, would cram it in for every turn—and in this manner I suppose ignorance and vanity has occasioned that cursed difficult confusion of signs, sounds, and sentiments, which so conspicuously disgrace the simple and salutary laws of language and science,—has covered every thing with error, folly, and darkness, and thrown all but the original unchangeable law of nature and things into disorder.

Y.

A good old Greek, Welch, and Saxon letter, and a diphthong vowel, and know not how it came to lose its consequence with us, but on principles mentioned above.

It

It is formed as E, but the breath drawn in instead of being pushed out, while the tongue drops a little at the point, the teeth close a little nearer, and the vowel or diphthong next it is pronounced by a gentler quick short breath, which makes it a compounded diphthong of the vowel E and quick H or Hāh!

It is in use as the letter I*, and in Greek and Saxon seems a compound of long or double E and short ah! or E or O, and sometimes as an E only—this agrees with the Greek Epsilon, and our Saxon word *eorth*, which was pronounced not *erth* but *yeorth*, and our *yeoman* is a corroborating proof.—If more was wanting I refer to the Lancashire dialect, and the pronouncing of our old name *Edmund* or rather

* And though used formerly as I in *myght*, *ryght*, &c. yet I must not forget to tell the reader, that Lancashire pronounces them *meet* and *reet*, still keeping the Greek Y or Epsilon to its original sounds of E or double Ee.

I also observe that *holy* may have been originally drawn from *whole*—*wholly*, (i. e.) totally or undivided. Yorkshire and Northumberland have it *hale*, *haly*, or *Yeal*, which signifies *healing* or *whole*, and our English words *whole*, *wholeing*, *healing* or *yealing* come from the same root.

ther *Eadmand*, which is in that country where the name is retained still called *Tedman*, and so to *Ted* or *Tem*—Cumberland calls *Eomont*, or *Eamont*, *Yeomon*, and perhaps other countries have yet this Greco-Saxon kind of sounding this EO, Y, Epsylon, or what other name you please to call it in like manner, and therefore proves this letter to be a *vowel*.

Whether it or I, or both should be kept in, I know not; for if this misty dawn of knowledge which now but gleams over the face of the world should clear up and heighten the human soul to its brightest blaze,—then, and not till then, may we know all we ought to know.

Z.

A queer zig-zag sort of a letter, and like Ts in sound ; its use seems to be so little that we may conclude and fix it a *vowel*—so sum up the evidence, and leave the reader both jury and judge.

Vowels

Vowels Both Consonants Unknown

A	R	C	B	Q
F	S	E	D	
J	V	G	K	
L	W	H	P	
M	X	I	T	
N	Y	U		
O	Z			

14

6

5

1

Fourteen vowels ! six mongrels ! five consonants ! and one devil knows what—form our present alphabet, consisting of twenty-six marks—but

Gentlemen,

If I could shew you that like errors and confused redundancy attend on your grammatic rules—in your diction, stile, and comprehension—in your food, in your physic—in your lust in your love—in your state in
your

your church—in your law and in your commerce.—If I could dart truth into your souls, and force conviction into your minds—if I could do it as plainly as I have done this, and tell you the whole secret lies in knowing right from wrong, would you or would you not believe me, and would you be candid enough to own it.

What says common sense?

I would—Then I tell you I can do it and will do it if I live—I have done it so far, and mean to do it in more—I tell you MOSES understood electricity and optics—that CHRIST knew these and knew more—he understood hunger and lust, he thirsted after right and warned men of wrong—he could *tell another's thoughts*, and tell their past actions by contact with the fluids—he knew the force of the air, and sweet sympathy of sounds—he could have touched the unison'd harp-string, reasoned on the whisper of St Paul's, and

and transmigrate a *sound*—a *thought*, or a *soul**—he understood the structure of the brain, and circulation of the blood.—In short, he could reason from things, right knew from wrong, and pursued truth to whatever it led him—he preached peace upon earth, goodwill towards men, and knew the happiness of others to be necessary to his own.—All this did he know, and told men he knew it—they felt it—yet would not believe, but—will you believe—ME !

There is a man that can do all this, bids me say—he courts but attention, and to deserve it relies upon proof—he is no enemy to to-day—no enthusiast for to-morrow—no sceptic in religion, nor visionary in philosophy—he reasons from *things*, and values not a *name*, yet reveres that of, FRANKLIN.

More yet I may hint——bank notes are not gold, and promises no payment—that the weight of air to that of water is like an empty bottle.

* As commonly understood.

bottle to a full one, and none could ever weigh a thing against itself—that the great Newton and demonstrative others were men that understood *things*, but in *forms* appear to be mistaken.

A later writer proved ALL things were FLUID—some thought fluids were *strings*—and Newton named them *balls*—in vision both may be *right*, but *both* wrong in reason.—A ball is a screw—screws make a string—and ALL parts are screws—tapered like a *sharp-toed-jack-screwed pegging-top*, knit together by something very subtle: which being placed in their place, *Move!*—said the FIAT—and every thing rose.

Air and mist grow like trees,—cabbages, and mushrooms—the clouds seem the branches, and leaves of the highest, dews and rain are their seeds—over their tops rush the wind, and pressing our bodies with the force of its fall, we struggle with a gust as a fish mounts a stream—But

Too much for a LUNATIC, and—
enough for a *Tester*!

